DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 645 TM 810 929

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TITLE Evaluation Studies and Change: A Review of the Literature.
PUB DATE [79]
NOTE 40p.; Faint print throughout.

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Decision Making; Evaluative Thinking; Information Utilization; Literature Reviews; *Medical Care Evaluation; Program Effectiveness; *Program Evaluation; Research Needs
IDENTIFIERS Evaluation Problems; Evaluation Research; *Evaluation Utilization

ABSTRACT

Evaluation research should be viewed as the source of knowledge on two levels: (1) how evaluation studies utilize results, and (2) how the knowledge that was evaluated is utilized. The purpose of this document is to systematically examine the literature pertinent to the utilization of evaluation results. The impetus for legitimization of evaluation in the area of health programs came about with the Great Society Programs of the 1960's and was strengthened in the 1970's by passage of legislation requiring certain proportions of federally supported program budgets to be directed towards assessment of program effectiveness. This document deals with analyzing evaluation and technical methods for implementing suggestions. Twenty-one pages of selected references make this document a complete in-hand research tool for the person involved in making authority decisions, collective decisions or optional decisions. (Author/CE)

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Evaluation Studies and Change:

A review of the Literature

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The issue of utilization of evaluation results has been receiving increasing attention recently. In spite of the fact that knowledge utilization studies have proliferated to more than 20,000 titles in the last 20 years, many will argue that few studies look at evaluation research as a source of such knowledge.

Davis and Salasin (1975) found that only 2.5 percent of the references in the utilization literature were related to evaluation, while only 5 percent of published evaluation studies mention utilization of results. Most of the studies that do examine the utilization of results from evaluation studies report low levels of utilization (Davis & Salasin, 1975). Patton (1979), however, believes that our definition of utilization has been too narrow in the past and argues that when the definition is expanded to include any legitimate use rather than adoption of results, utilization patterns increase dramatically.

There appears to be a noticeable absence in the literature of any empirical investigation of the extent and determinants of utilization of evaluation results (Weiss, 1972b). Though there are some studies on the determinants of utilization of evaluation results (Bernstein & Freeman, 1975; Brennam, 1976; Cohen, 1977; Patton et al., 1978; and Patton, 1979), most of the empirical literature is generalized to the area of dissemination of knowledge and/or innovations and subsequent adoption of innovations (e.g., Fleigel & Kivlin, 1966; Becker, 1970a; Becker, 1970b; and Blum, 1964), or evaluation of change efforts in organizational development (e.g., Hage & Aiken, 1967; Hage & Aiken, 1970; Jenks, 1970; Kelly, 1976; Kilmann & Herden, 1976; Kirchhoff, 1977; and Lawler, 1977).

The purpose of this paper then is to examine systematically the literature pertinent to the utilization of evaluation results. Given that evaluation

is an important and useful activity, its fullest potential will not be realized until we understand both the extent and the determinants of its utilization.

Definition of Evaluation

Patton (1979) states that the impetus for legitimization of evaluation in the area of health programs probably came with the Great Society Programs of the 1960's, and was further strengthened in the 1970's by passage of legislation requiring certain proportions of federally supported program budgets to be directed towards assessment of program effectiveness. Many pitfalls exist in the development and implementation of evaluation strategies for health programs, not the least of which is the general disagreement about what evaluation activities are and the technical methods for their implementation (Perkins, 1977, p. 639).

Provus (1972) claimed that evaluation at its basic level is simply the comparison of performance against a criterion or standard. Evaluation then, can be viewed as a program development process, as well as a process of stabilization and assessment (pp. 117-118).

Merriman (1972) sees evaluation as a means of organization--that is, it facilitates program management by systematically focusing information relative to problem solving (p. 226).

A working definition of evaluation has been proposed by Beckhard and Harris (1977) as:

> ... that set of planned information gathering and analysis activities undertaken to provide those responsible for the management of change with a satisfactory assessment of the effects and/or progress of the change effort (Beckhard & Harris, 1977, p. 96).

This, however, is clearly an organizational development (OD) orientation for evaluation. Weiss (1972b), in a proposal for the empirical evaluation of evaluation research, stated:

> ... the basic rationale for evaluation is that it provides information for action. Its primary justification is that it contributes to the rationalization of decision making. Although it can serve such other functions as knowledge building and theory testing, unless it gains serious hearing when program decisions are made, it fails in its major purpose (Weiss, 1972b, p. 220).

Once evaluation activities have been agreed upon and successfully implemented, there is certainly no guarantee that the results will be utilized in the decision making process. In spite of the fact that evaluation research should be conducted primarily for improving the quality of social programming (Patton, 1979, p. 59) by improving the decision making process, an historical review of the literature revealed that evaluation research has not generally had significant impact on decision making relative to programming (Weiss, 1972b, p. 10-11).

At the same time, Mushkin (1973) warns that utilization of the results of poorly designed studies may be an even more serious problem than underutilization of results. The quality of the evaluation study may, therefore, be an important variable to examine in studies of utilization of evaluation. In either case, it seems clear that:

> The promise of evaluation research is that it can provide systematic information on the actual impact of organizational activities and feed this information back into the policy-making process in such a way that subsequent decisions can be made regarding those activities (Hoole, 1978, p. 150).

Research and Evaluation: Utilization of Results

A survey by Windle and Wolkman (1973, cited in Davis & Salasin, 1975) on the extent and number of program changes resulting from evaluation studies was sent to 325 community mental health centers. The results of the study are based on a 58 percent response rate (n = 189). Of the 189 centers responding to the survey, 70 percent cited specific program changes

resulting from evaluation activities. A total of 249 such evaluation-inspired program changes were reported. Of these reported changes, 8 percent led to cutbacks or phasing-out of services and practices, 21 percent to expansion of practices, 31 percent to the development of new practices, and 40 percent to changes in policy or practices. Of the surveyed centers, 136 failed to respond to the survey. Most common among the evaluation activities reported were: 1) monitoring of center service process; 2) measuring change in clients; 3) assessment of efficiency; 4) evaluation by others; 5) assessment of incidence or prevalence of mental illness; 6) evaluation of community attitudes; and 7) client-involved assessment. However, reports by Attkisson, Hargreaves, Horowitz and Sorenson (1978), Weiss (1972a, 1973a), Agarwala-Rogers (1977), Patton et al., (1978) and Patton (1979) appear to disagree on the extent of utilization of the results of evaluation studies.

Cohen (1977) reports that part of the problem with identifying the magnitude of the impact of evaluation findings may relate to the inconsistent and often vague operational definitions of research utilization. Some writers state that simple awareness of findings constitutes utilization, while others challenge that, claiming utilization requires that the findings be considered in the decision making process. Still others believe that adoption of recommendations is the only true measure of utilization of findings. Cohen himself proposes that consideration of the results as one of several information inputs during decision making be an adequate reflection of its utilization (Cohen, 1977, pp. 526-527).

An additional problem encountered in the measurement of the level of utilization of the results of evaluation studies relates to the time lag between reporting of results and noticeable changes in programs or organizations. Ciarlo (cited in Davis & Salasin, 1975) reports that:

> He too, had reached the conclusion that evaluation results were generally ignored. But after continued close observation of the careers of his findings, he is learning that a time period of about 9 months must pass before things begin to happen that can be traced to the evaluation efforts. Even then, the decision makers may not have conscious awareness of where the seeds were sown (Ciarlo, cited in Davis & Salasin, 1975).

Rossman, Hober and Ciarlo (1979, p. 13) agree with Ciarlo's (1975) earlier assessment of the time lag. In a study of the impact of evaluation relative to utilization, they found that the time lag between decision making and implementation of decisions was 4 to 9 months.

Scanlon and Waller (1979) add that the use of evaluation is a necessary though not sufficient criterion for judging evaluation studies. They remind us that improvement is not the only outcome of change. In other words, a program might change as a result of the recommendations of an evaluation study, but that the program might not improve in any way.

As a result of much of the available knowledge on utilization of evaluation results, Davis and Salasin (1975) suggest that evaluators adjust their expectations on both the timing and form of possible utilization. Beyond that, they expect that better "tracer evaluations" of evaluation utilization might provide more reinforcement to evaluators. This second-order evaluation, or evaluation of evaluation studies, is what Scriven (1972) referred to as meta-evaluation. Davis and Salasin (1975, p. 626) also recommend that evaluators extend their roles to encompass change consultation since it appears that evaluation and planned change go hand in hand.

Organizational Change - Diffusion of Innovations

Characteristics of Innovations

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) proposed that five characteristics were essential to explain rate of adoption and innovation. Though these five are not strictly related to the characteristics of the organization, they are

related to the characteristics of the innovation. These five characteristics are:

1. Relative advantage - the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supercedes. The degree of relative advantage may be measured in economic terms, but often social prestige factors, convenience, and satisfaction are also important components. The greater the perceived relative advantage of an innovation, the more rapid its rate of adoption.

2. Compatibility - the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of the perceivers.

3. Complexity - the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use.

4. Trialability - the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis.

5. Observability - the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others.

(Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971, pp. 22-23)

Organizational Change

Although Cox (1977) reminds us that the literature on innovation diffusion and organizational change is only tangentially related to the specific issue of the apparent under-utilization of evaluation results, a thorough understanding of the process involved in either is dependent upon the general organizational development and change literature. Greer (1977) provides an excellent framework upon which to review the foundations of such literature. Three approaches to the explanation of change were proposed as follows: 1) Classical diffusion theory; 2) Organizational factors; and 3) Political factors.

Classical Diffusion Theory

Classical diffusion theory explains adoption of innovations in terms of an individual's actions within an organizational structure that impacts on that organization in such a way as to force change (Greer, 1977, p. 505). It is the set of characteristics that make that individual likely to hear of innovations, adopt them and then pass them along to others that is the subject of classical theory.

The literature contains many examples of this classical approach including Chesler and Flanders' (1967) study of principals in school districts; Fleigel and Kivlin's (1966) study of farmers' perceptions of practices and their likelihood of adoption; Kaplan's (1967) factor analytic study which resulted in the identification of nine factors related to adoption of innovation (five of which were related to the executive director of an organization); both Loy's (1969) and Berlin's (1969) studies of individual traits as antecedents to change; and Mohr's (1969) attempt to explain innovative behavior by examining the motivation of the directors of 93 health departments. All are prime examples of the classical approach.

It appears, however, that the prototype of Greer's (1977) classical diffusion typology was Becker's (1970) study of innovation in the public health departments of three states. Becker looked at the nature of adoption of two classes of innovation--those of high adoption potential and those of low adoption potential (HAP and LAP as rated by independent judges) in terms of the centrality of the public health officer among his professional peers, the officers' most valued source of information and specific demographic characteristics. Becker set out to test the theory behind the diffusion model, especially related to professionals and their behavior and to try to improve the predictive power of the model.

Patton (1979) reviewed the literature on utilization focused evaluation and reported 11 major predictors of potential for utilization. Of these 11 factors only two emerged that were consistently important in the interviews of key personnel related to federal program evaluations--the political context of the evaluation, and a personal factor (defined as the presence of an identifiable individual or group who personally care about the evaluation and the information it has generated) (Patton, 1979, p. 64).

Organizational Factors

The adoption of innovations by individuals tends to be well explained by classical theory. However, there is some controversy over whether prediction of an individual's decisions on innovation explains complex organizational behavior adequately (Greer, 1977). There is also some confusion among the organizational structure theorists.

The traditional organizational structure theorists tend to look at such variables as organizational complexity (Hage & Dewar, 1973; Sapolsky, 1967; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Hage & Aiken, 1967; and Carroll, 1966), degree of centralization (Corwin, 1972; Hage & Aiken, 1970), degree of formalization as measured by rules and job codification (Hage & Dewar, 1973; Hage & Aiken, 1970; and Hage & Aiken, 1967), clarity of goals (Jenks, 1970; and Miles, 1965), social expectations (Lippit, Watson & Westly, 1958), distribution of power (Rubin, Plovnik & Fry, 1974; and Sapolsky, 1967), bureaucratic structure (Bernis, 1971), size, affluence and capacity (Carroll, 1967), organizational inertia (Corwin, 1972; and Hage & Aiken, 1970), participation in decision making (Chesler & Flanders, 1967) and morale (Miles, 1965).

More recently, a number of studies have been done in which scales have been developed and validated that measure an organization's readiness to change. Among the most ambitious projects thus far has been carried out under the auspices of the Program Evaluation Resource Center (PERC) of the Hennepin County Mental Health Services Program in Minneapolis. Kiresuk et al. (1977) have expanded and refined Davis' (1971) A VICTORY[1] paradigm to an 85-item instrument designed to measure organizational readiness for change. This instrument or a related form has now been tested in over 200 human service agencies in an attempt to predict staff resistance and/or readiness to adopt program evaluation as an organizational change. Davis & Salasin (1975) report that this instrument now appears ready to be used in a prospective examination of its ability to predict readiness for change.

Seigel and Kaemmerer (1978) attempted to conceptualize the dimensions of organizational climate present in innovative organizations, translate these dimensions into a measuring instrument, and establish the reliability and validity of that instrument. They hypothesized that the characteristics of innovative organizations could be categorized into several dimensions and a factor analytic study of 1899 students and teachers responding to as many as 225 items resulted in two factors which were significantly related to organizational support for innovation--support for creativity, and tolerance of differences (Seigel & Kaemmerer, 1978, p. 560).

There have been other paradigms proposed in an attempt to explain organizational readiness for change, including Glaser's (1973) CORRECT[2] and Havelock & Lingwood's (1973) H-E-L-P-S-C-O-R-E-S.[3] However, Bonoma (1977) warns:

> ... the experienced evaluator often despairs at such suggestions because of the extreme context dependence

> and situational specificity of his or her own application. This is just to say somewhat pedantically that each evaluative setting appears to differ from its fellow, to be unique, and to require a different tack from the last one as regards implementation. Therefore, rules of thumb, and even well-articulated models are sometimes of little use to the practicing manager or implementor interested in overcoming resistance to change (Bonoma, 1977, pp. 445-456).

Political Factors

A political resource may be defined as any resource that may be used to persuade or coerce individuals or organizations to cooperate by applying their own resources in the pursuit of leader-desired goals (Greer, 1977, p. 552). Little empirical work has been done in this area, though more and more non-empirical exhortation to action is seen.

Roos (1974) projects two primary factors which impact on decision making in hospitals: 1) the political and technological events affecting the hospitals; and 2) the performance satisfaction/dissatisfaction continua of groups within the hospital. Milio (1971), in a case study of organizational change, identified the politics as a force to be reckoned with over time.

The result of a recent examination of utilization of results of health program evaluations indicated that politics was one of the two most important factors (Patton et al., 1978). Little is said in the literature about a measure of political influence on innovation, though Weiss (1973b) warns that its presence is felt in a number of ways, including: 1) the policies and programs with which evaluation deals are the creatures of political decisions; 2) because evaluation is undertaken in order to feed into decision making, its reports enter the political arena; and 3) evaluation itself has a political stance.

Some good groundwork has been laid for theory development on organizational change as predicted by individual characteristics and information (e.g., Becker, 1970; Hage & Dewar, 1973); structural variables (Hage &

Aiken, 1967; Hage & Dewar, 1973); political factors (Patton et al., 1978; and Patton, 1979) and aggregate paradigms (Davis, 1971; Davis & Salasin, 1975; Kiresuk, Lun, Shultz & Larsen, 1977; and Seigel & Kaemmerer, 1978). These theories now need to be expanded in the area of adoption of the results of innovation. In spite of the fact that studies are now beginning to show that evaluation results are probably used more often than was thought in the past, it is often unknown how or why the results are used (Patton, 1979) or for how long (Davis & Salasin, 1975).

Two additional issues are raised by Greer (1977). First, innovations should be classified because additive models alone may not be complete (see Becker, 1974, HAP versus LAP on adoption rate). Second, most studies of innovation don't question the implementation of the innovation itself, but are content to look for determinants of its adoption (Greer, 1977).

Measures of Implementation

Gross, Giacquinta and Bernstein (cited in Fullan & Pomfert, 1977) define implementation as the "extent to which organizational members have changed their behavior so that it is congruent with the behavior patterns required by the innovation" (p. 16). Greer (1977) has divided implementation into several components: the innovation-decision process, the actual level of use of the innovation over time and the consequences of innovations.

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) further break down the innovation-decision process into four broad areas: knowledge of the innovation (which involves exposure to the innovation's existence and some understanding of how it functions), a persuasion function (the formation of a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the innovation), a decision function (resulting from engagement in activities which lead to a choice to adopt or reject the

innovation), and a confirmation function (involving reinforcement for the innovation-decision made) (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971, p. 25).

Moreover, at least three categories of decisions are involved in the process: 1) optional decisions (made by individuals regardless of the decisions of other members of the system); 2) collective decisions (individuals in the social system agree to make the decision by concensus); and 3) authority decisions (forced upon individuals by someone in a superordinate power position) (Rogers & Shoemaker 1971, p. 36). The rate at which these decisions can be made varies also. The authority decisons are often implemented most rapidly and collective decisions least rapidly.

Once adoption decisions are made, implementation does not always follow. Hall and Loucks (1977) warn:

> It appears, however, that in most experimental and evaluation studies, the presence of the innovation, the treatment, is taken more on faith than on the basis of systematic documentation.... Interestingly, change and diffusion researches seem to have held the same implicit assumption. In many of the change models and studies (e.g., Havelock, 1971; Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971) implementation of the innovation is assumed once the adoption decision has been made, or it is included with little description in the adoption/adaption phase. Great attention is given to the research and development aspects of innovation development and diffusion, and to user system problem solving prior to implementation. The use of the innovation in the classroom is either attended to briefly or left to others to document (Hall & Loucks, 1977, p. 264).

Fullen and Pomfret (1977) concur, and identify several reasons for studying implementation. First, we often do not know what has changed unless we measure it directly. Second, we can begin to identify some of the most problematic aspects of bringing about change (either in the research and development phase, the decision phase or the organizational phase). Third, failure to study implementation may result in implementation

being ignored or confused with other aspects of the process of change such as adoption (the decision to use an innovation), or we may confuse the determinants of implementation with implementation itself.

Additional problems in evaluation of the change process may result when reported use is relied on rather than a direct measure of implementation. Reported use of an innovation may in fact only be a reflection of an attitude of acceptance of that innovation by the individuals involved.

There are at least two aspects of research on implementation. One approach involves the comparison of the actual implementation with that which was planned, in other words, a comparison of planning versus implementation. This is referred to as fidelity of implementation by Fullan and Pomfret (1977, p. 340). The second may focus its analysis on the complexities of the change process vis-a-vis how innovations become developed or changed during the process of implementation. Fullan and Pomfret refer to this as mutual adaptation (1977, p. 340).

After a review of several approaches to measurement of implementation, Fullan and Pomfret (1977) make several general points:

1. Someone studying implementation should probably use more than one method of assessment in order to adequately tap several dimensions of the behavior.
2. Some dimensions of implementation can be directly observed, whereas others can only be inferred.
3. Either of the methods used can be adapted to any type of study (fidelity or mutual adaptation).

A model providing guidelines for the measurement of levels of use of innovation is provided by Hall and Loucks (1977). Their Levels of Use (LOU) of curricular innovations detail eight categories of use and related decision points that may be identified during structured interviews.

Summary

A great deal of model building has been done in the social sciences in an attempt to explicate the relationship between large arrays of variables and utilization of knowledge from some source. Greer (1977) provided an excellent review of the literature available in this area. Patton et al. (1978) and Patton (1979) report the findings of a relatively recent examination on the utilization of the results of 20 federal health program evaluations. The study examines the relationship between 11 factors and utilization. These 11 factors were drawn primarily from the existing literature; however, it was found that only two were consistently identified as critical in the explanation of utilization: the political context within which the program operated and the evaluation was conducted, and something identified as a personal factor. The personal factor turned out to be the most consistent predictor of utilization. This factor referred to support from some individual or group within the organization for the results and their use.

This seems to be fairly consistent with the report of Becker (1970) who found in an examination of the adoption of innovations in health departments that change follows individual rather than organizational structure variables. Becker found that a sociometric measure of centrality as well as an examination of an individual's most valued source of information proved to be good predictors of adoption of innovation but only when the innovation itself was rated independently as having high adoption potential (HAP). When the adoption potential was low (LAP), the relationship was explained away.

A relatively recent approach has been the development of aggregate measures of organizational readiness for change with Davis (1971) providing a prototype in A VICTORY. Most of these aggregate measures provide

much the same information as is provided by structural theorists, however, A VICTORY provides an assessment of staff perceptions of organizational readiness to accept innovation. This would appear to be closely related to both the individual and personal factors identified as important by Patton et al. (1978).

A related model developed by Seigel and Kaemmerer (1978) contained three factors associated with organizational readiness to change or innovate: 1) a factor labeled support of creativity; 2) a factor called tolerance of differences; and 3) a factor called personal commitment. With very high estimated coefficients of internal consistency (.94, .94, .86, respectively), and support for criterion related validity, such an instrument would seem quite applicable to the study of the utilization of evaluation results.

Hall and Loucks (1977) in their Levels of Use (LOU) of Innovations provide the foundation for realistically categorizing implementation rather than adoption decisions (this distinction identified as critical by Fullan and Pomfret, 1977). In addition, the work by Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) on the characteristics of innovations provide a structure for the classification of innovations that Becker (1970) felt vital to unmasking spurious relationships between predictors and rate of adoption.

Based on a review of current literature, it would appear that the areas most in need of exploration in further research include the following:

The relationship between utilization of evaluation results and

1. the characteristics of user agencies (e.g., public vs. private; health, social service, etc.);
2. the type of evaluation (e.g., process, outcome, cost-effectiveness, etc.);

3. the evaluation design (e.g., pre-post, experimental, etc.);

4. the quality of the evaluation; and

5. the nature of the results (e.g., positive versus negative results).

FOOTNOTES

[1]A VICTORY: eight factors measuring readiness for change (Davis, 1971) including Ability, Values, Idea, Circumstances, Timing, Obligation, Resistances and Yield.

[2]CORRECT: a list of research factors affecting adoption (Glaser, 1973) including Credibility, Observability, Relevance, Relative Advantage, Ease in Understanding and Installation, Compatibility, Trailability, Divisibility, or Reversibility.

[3]H-E-L-P-S-C-O-R-E-S: a schema for diagnosis of problems in communication of new knowledge (Havelock & Lingwood, 1973) including Homophily, Empathy, Linkage, Proximity, Structuring, Capacity, Openness, Reward, Energy, Synergy.

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